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Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children

State of the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary:

The present report has been prepared in response to paragraph 21 of resolution 54/93, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its fifty-fifth session on the state of the preparations for the special session for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Two reports on this matter have been submitted to the Preparatory Committee of the special session: "Proposals on the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children in 2001" (A/AC.256/2, 29 December 1999), and "Update on the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children in 2001" (A/AC.256/5, 3 May 2000).

The report indicates that there is strong momentum building for the special session. Substantive preparations are under way at the national, regional and global levels. Governments, non-governmental organizations and international agencies are actively involved in a variety of preparatory activities, spurred by the follow-up to the World Summit for Children, the virtually universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the convening of the special session.

* This document was submitted to the United Nations Secretariat after the official submission deadline owing to constraints in the information collection process.

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I. Background

1. Ten years after the World Summit for Children, held in 1990, and following the mid-decade review of the Summit Declaration and Plan of Action undertaken by the General Assembly in 1996, the General Assembly in its resolution 54/93 decided to convene in September 2001 at United Nations Headquarters a special session for follow-up to the Summit (referred to below as the "special session on children").

2. In 1989, a year before the Summit, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted. It has become the most ratified human rights treaty in history, embodying the commitment of States parties to respect, fulfil, promote and protect children's rights. Subsequently, two Optional Protocols were adopted on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

3. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly decided that "the special session, while reviewing the achievements in the implementation and results of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, will undertake a renewed commitment and consider future action for children in the next decade".

4. The same resolution established a preparatory committee open to all Member States and observers of the General Assembly, with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) serving as the substantive secretariat. At its organizational session (New York, 7-8 February 2000), the Committee elected a Bureau of five members: as Chairperson, Patricia Durrant (Jamaica); as Vice-Chairs, Madina Ly Tall (Mali), Anwarul K. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), and Hanns Schumacher (Germany); and as Rapporteur, Lidija Topic (Bosnia and Herzegovina).[1] It also decided on the participation of non-governmental organizations in the preparatory process, as explained in section III below.

5. At the Committee's first substantive session (New York, from 30 May to 2 June 2000),[2] delegations discussed the report of the Secretary-General, "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century" (A/AC.256/3-E/ICEF/2000/13).[3] Three panel discussions also took place, dealing with the assessment of the implementation of the goals of the World Summit for Children, emerging issues, and future action for children.[4] The 11 panellists included experts from different technical and cultural backgrounds and two representatives of youth organizations.

6. Decisions taken at the first substantive session included:

(a) A proposal to the General Assembly that two substantive sessions of the Preparatory Committee be convened in New York during 2001, one from 29 January to 2 February, and another from 11 to 15 June;

(b) A provisional programme of work for the Committee's second substantive session;

(c) A proposal to the General Assembly that the special session be convened in New York for three days during the first and second weeks of the general debate of the fifty-sixth General Assembly;

(d) Arrangements for the accreditation of non-governmental organizations, as described in section III below.

7. The Preparatory Committee also agreed to authorize the Bureau to prepare a draft outcome document for the special session, as explained in section II below. It was recommended that thematic consultations involving experts in various fields be held to determine how to shape the operational strategies that will achieve practical and measurable outcomes for children throughout their lives. The strategies will form the basis of an agenda for the future that will be adopted at the special session. A first technical consultation was convened in Atlanta, United States of America, in October 2000.

8. The first substantive session included side events organized by non-governmental organizations, Governments and UNICEF, involving the participation of young people, as explained in section III below.

II. Preparation of the draft outcome document for the special session

9. At its first substantive session, the Preparatory Committee agreed to authorize its Bureau, with the support of the substantive secretariat, to prepare a draft outcome document for the special session, taking into account the views expressed during the session, for

consideration at the second substantive session. Highlights of those views are provided below.

10. It was proposed that a first draft of the document be made available to Member States in November 2000.

11. According to the views expressed in response to the report of the Secretary-General,[3] the future agenda for children to be adopted at the special session should be innovative, concise and action-oriented. It should be broad enough to address the concerns of children in both developing and industrialized countries, while prioritizing key actions that will make a major difference to the most disadvantaged children.

12. The Preparatory Committee also concluded that the report of the Secretary-General justly identified deepening poverty and inequality, proliferating conflict, the deadly spread of HIV/AIDS and continuing discrimination, particularly against women and girls, as formidable challenges in developing future actions for children. An integrated approach to the rights and well-being of children and adolescents, based on the life cycle, provides a useful conceptual framework. The three key outcome areas for children — that all children should have a good start in life; that they should have the opportunity to acquire a good education; and that adolescents should have opportunities fully to develop their individual capacities — capture the issues of fundamental importance.

13. The goals adopted at the 1990 World Summit need to be updated and the achievements that have already been made must be sustained. However, the major new challenges detailed in the report of the Secretary-General need to be addressed so as to ensure that there are no setbacks.

14. The principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child should underpin all future action for children. The rights of all children — in particular those marginalized by poverty, gender or other forms of discrimination — should be given priority attention. While significant gains have been made in legal reform, appropriate policy, budget and institutional reforms should be instituted in all countries.

15. Although globalization has strengthened international cooperation and accelerated economic growth and social development in many instances, it has had profound exclusionary and negative consequences for children. Its dynamism and reach must be harnessed to promote children's rights. Information and communication technology should be made available to developing countries to help improve the quality and efficiency of the provision of basic social services.

16. The vision of breaking the cycle of poverty in one generation received strong endorsement. Universal access to basic social services is a key component of the fight against poverty. More resources are needed, and the resources available must be better utilized to fight poverty and to provide access to basic services for all. Official development assistance must be accelerated so as to reach the agreed United Nations target. Other measures, such as a significant reduction in external debt and focusing aid flows on the neediest countries and the neediest people, and on countries suffering economic crises, must be part of the international action in favour of children.

17. Child protection issues should be given greater attention in the future. Special efforts are needed to protect the rights of child labourers and child prisoners; children affected by drug abuse; children, especially girls, affected by sexual and emotional abuse; children with disabilities; children affected by armed conflict; children who are traumatized or displaced or who are refugees; and child victims of genital mutilation. The adoption of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, was welcomed.

18. Participation, along with non-discrimination and the best interests of the child, are overarching principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They should guide the setting of future goals and strategies. Child and adolescent participation means developing a culture of respect for their views.

19. The important link between women's and children's rights and well-being was emphasized. Other international human rights treaties, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, should guide future actions for children. Parenting education was encouraged, not just for mothers but also for fathers.

20. Education, with an emphasis on girls' education is the key to future human development. Access to

basic health services, clean water, safe sanitation and proper nutrition must remain priorities.

21. More emphasis should be placed on the diseases that take a high toll on children, such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, measles, diphtheria and malaria. There is need to formulate and promote child-oriented policies, strategies and programmes to prevent and combat HIV/AIDS. Adolescents should have full access to information on responsible sexual behaviour and equitable gender roles and to reproductive and sexual health services.

III. Participation of key actors

22. The main actions taken to facilitate the participation of key actors in the special session are outlined below.

A. Personal representatives of heads of State and Government

23. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly "strongly encourages the full and effective participation of Member States, and invites the heads of State and Government to consider assigning personal representatives" to the Preparatory Committee. To date, 15 personal representatives have been designated, including ambassadors, parliamentarians, senior policy specialists, special advisers and heads of non-governmental organizations. It is expected that the number will increase by the time of the second substantive session of the Committee. The role of personal representatives is to ensure broad and high-level participation in the national review of the Summit follow-up, to provide substantive input to the preparation of the outcome, and to mobilize broad civil-society participation in the events leading up to and following the special session.

B. Non-governmental organizations, children and adolescents

24. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly recognizes the importance of a participatory process at the national, regional and international levels with a view, inter alia, to establishing partnerships between a broad range of actors, including children and youth, in order to raise momentum for children's rights and needs. The Assembly further recognizes the important role of all relevant actors, including non-governmental organizations, in implementing the Plan of Action, and stresses the need for their active involvement in the preparatory process, including involvement in the meetings of the Preparatory Committee and at the special session itself.

25. The modalities for the accreditation of non-governmental organizations have been agreed upon by the Preparatory Committee. At its organizational session, the Committee decided that its work should be open to non-governmental organizations accredited with the Economic and Social Council or with UNICEF and to other such organizations with a collaborative relationship and partnership with UNICEF. The latter organizations were invited on a no-objection basis. At its first substantive session, the Committee decided to extend from April to October 2000 the deadline for the approval on a no-objection basis of accreditation of additional non-governmental organizations.

26. The Committee also decided on the accreditation of non-governmental organizations to the special session itself. Non-governmental organizations that enjoy consultative status with the Economic and Social Council or are accredited to UNICEF and other organizations accredited during the preparatory process would be accredited, in accordance with relevant decisions of the Preparatory Committee. The Committee deferred to its second substantive session the consideration of specific arrangements for participation of non-governmental organizations in the special session.

27. More than 235 non-governmental organizations participated in the first substantive session of the Committee. The NGO Committee on UNICEF, acting as counterpart to the substantive secretariat, convened a task force to organize the participation of the non-governmental organizations at the session. The NGO Committee prepared a report on relevant activities during the session.[5] Non-governmental organizations took the floor during the session and the discussions following the three expert panels. Four non-governmental organization regional caucuses and two issue-based caucuses (the Child Rights Caucus and the Child Advocacy Caucus) were organized for the session. The Child Rights Caucus worked in groups according to clusters of principles and rights of the Convention.

28. Some Member States included young people in their delegations to the first substantive session, and the panel discussions held during the session included representatives of youth organizations. One of the side events during the session was an informal panel of young people, co-hosted by the Government of Canada and UNICEF. The six panellists — all under the age of 20 — spoke on such issues as discrimination, access to services, and supportive relationships with adults. In addition, Save the Children/Sweden and the UNICEF regional office for South Asia introduced *Children's Rights: Turning Principles into Practice*, a multicountry collection of essays by children's rights activists.

29. On 19 September 2000, UNICEF convened a consultative meeting with members of the Child Rights Caucus. The consultation focused on shaping a common vision for a new global agenda for children and on non-governmental organization participation in the preparations for the special session.

30. UNICEF has continued to work with a wide range of partners, including civil society organizations and young people, to identify effective ways for children and young people to participate in the special session process. UNICEF is also encouraging countries to include young people in the national reviews and to seek meaningful ways to involve them in the preparations for the special session. Together with Save the Children and Plan International, UNICEF is hosting a meeting from 2 to 4 October 2000 in London to discuss adolescent participation in the process.

31. The panel discussion on emerging issues indicated that serious consideration should be given to a special event or forum on the rights of the child, to be held in conjunction with the special session and involving the broad participation of children and adolescents, civil society and the private sector.

C. Role of the United Nations system

32. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly invited all relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to participate actively in the preparations for the special session, and requested the Secretary-General to ensure an effective and coordinated system-wide response to the preparations for the special session. Accordingly, the Executive Director of UNICEF requested relevant United Nations organizations to provide inputs to the special session. The inputs, due by the end of September 2000, should contain an account of their contributions to the achievement of the goals of the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children; suggestions for identifying emerging trends; a discussion of key issues and challenges that affect the needs and rights of children and women; and proposals for future actions. The secretariat will ensure that these inputs are incorporated into the report of the Secretary-General on the end-of-decade review, and conveyed at the substantive debate.

IV. End-of-decade reviews

33. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly "invites Governments and relevant organizations, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as regional and subregional organizations, to undertake reviews of progress achieved since the World Summit for Children". It also "reaffirms its request to the Secretary-General to submit to the special session, through the preparatory committee, a review of the implementation and results of the World Declaration and Plan of Action, including appropriate recommendations for further action, which also elaborates on the best practices noted and obstacles encountered in the implementation as well as on measures to overcome those obstacles". The end-of-decade review process should also benefit from contributions from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

34. Reviews are being prepared at the national, regional and global levels. Governments have been requested to submit to UNICEF, by the end of December 2000, a short summary report, including an assessment of specific actions and follow-up and monitoring to the World Summit Plan of Action and lessons learned and recommendations for future action. The main body of each national report is to be accompanied by a common set of indicators of the progress made towards the goals of the 1990 Plan of Action. Technical guidelines for the preparation of the report have been provided by UNICEF.

35. Preparation of the end-of-decade review is under way in most countries, with the assistance of UNICEF and agencies of the United Nations system and the participation of a variety of non-governmental partners. A number of countries have put in place a national committee to steer the process. Countries are drawing on a variety of data sources, including country reports on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, reports on the major United Nations conferences held during the 1990s, national policy documents, reports on the 20/20 Initiative, common country assessments, reports of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), poverty reduction strategy papers, UNICEF situation analyses of children and women, mid-term review reports and major evaluations. Assessment of national plans of action will be supplemented by in-depth assessments, to be conducted by UNICEF in selected countries.

36. The UNICEF multiple indicators cluster surveys (MICS), and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are key sources for statistical analysis, particularly where such data are not available in national systems. MICS constitute the largest single data collection programme for monitoring the situation of children and the realization of their rights in the world. UNICEF is currently helping 70 countries, covering more than half of the developing world population, to conduct MICS, including support to regional technical workshops. The first two rounds of workshops have been completed in each region, and the last one is currently under way. UNICEF has also developed a set of global databases for the end-of-decade review covering cross-sectoral and trend data for more than 50 indicators. Some of these databases will be made available on the Internet on an experimental basis, in the last quarter of 2000.

V. Regional reviews and preparatory activities

37. A number of activities are being undertaken to support regional reviews of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. UNICEF has been supporting regional reviews in the course of the past two years, including assessments of trends in key indicators that take advantage of the ChildInfo database. In addition, UNICEF regional offices will produce a regional synthesis and analysis of national reports by early 2001. The assessment of trends, including in-depth thematic analyses using MICS data, will continue after the submission of national reviews. In addition to the regional end-of-decade reviews, a number of regional activities related to the preparation of the special session are under way. The major activities in each region are summarized below.

A. Africa

38. The Summit of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) (Lomé, Togo, 10-12 July 2000) adopted a decision "Africa's children, Africa's future", in which it welcomed the convening of the special session on children and the launching of a global movement for children. Member States were encouraged to attend the special session with representation at the highest level, to designate representatives to the preparatory process and to articulate a visionary but feasible agenda for African children over the next decade. An African position, prepared by the OAU secretariat, in consultation with relevant international and African institutions and civil society organizations, will be made available before the special session. The Summit recognized HIV/AIDS as a priority challenge and committed OAU to follow-up activities in collaboration with international organizations and donors. The Summit also discussed a plan of action on strategies to support orphans, vulnerable children, and children infected by HIV/AIDS in Africa, and to address child trafficking issues. The Labour and Social Affairs Commission of OAU will meet in Gabon in April 2001 to further elaborate the African common position discussed by the Lomé Summit.

39. Other activities will take place in the coming months and in 2001. The European Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are organizing a meeting on HIV/AIDS and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Harare, Zimbabwe, 30 October–2 November 2000. Another significant event to advance the struggle against AIDS will be the African Development Forum, organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in cooperation with UNICEF, 4-8 December 2000 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Forum will focus on mobilizing leadership to combat HIV/AIDS, including high-level government, civil society and youth leaders. In addition, the Government of Nigeria plans to host a

special summit of heads of State and Government on HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases in early 2001.

40. The extensive data collection now under way for the end-of-decade review in Africa will contribute not only to programme planning and advocacy but also to the production of an atlas on the impact of HIV/AIDS on children and women in the region. The project, coordinated by UNICEF in eastern and southern Africa, will highlight the impact of HIV/AIDS on children's rights and well-being and will contain maps displaying the impact at the national and subnational levels. The atlas will be published in time for the special session on children.

41. Also in eastern and southern Africa, a consultation, Leadership for Children, will be organized in February 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with the participation of the OAU Secretary-General and the executive secretaries of SADC and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, with the support of the UNICEF regional office. The consultation will bring together leading African and Africanist intellectuals, media leaders, young people and civil society leaders to consider the situation of children in Africa in the coming decade. The event will be an important preliminary step towards an Africa-wide conference on children which UNICEF and OAU will organize early in 2001.

42. The UNICEF regional office for West and Central Africa has taken several initiatives, including the organization of a meeting with non-governmental organizations in November 2000 in Dakar, Senegal, on preparations for the special session. Also in that month and in Dakar, a workshop on adolescent rights will be held.

B. Middle East and North Africa

43. In May 2000, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and UNICEF supported a regional workshop on the role of the private sector in promoting the rights of the child, convened by the Tunis-based Arab Institute for Human Rights. In June 2000, the League of Arab States (LAS) called on Member States to undertake national reviews of the situation of children and to participate in preparations for the special session at the highest possible level. In the same month, LAS held a seminar in Alexandria, Egypt, on early childhood.

44. LAS has prepared a draft declaration and framework for action on the rights of children for the period 2001-2010. Preparations are under way for an Arab high-level conference on children, in April 2001, to review progress towards the 1990 goals and to identify future courses of action. A preparatory conference will take place in Beirut, Lebanon, 12-15 February 2001. Partners involved include LAS, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), UNICEF, the Arab Gulf Programme for the United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND), the Arab Council for Childhood and Development (ACCD) and the Arab NGO Network (Shabaka). Each of these institutions is taking the lead in one of the preparatory meetings for experts, civil society organizations, youth and media. Expert papers will form the basis for a report on the state of the Arab child.

45. A regional youth forum will take place from 29 October to 1 November 2000, in Amman. The *State of the World's Children, 2001* will be launched in December 2000 in a regional event intended to place early childhood on the national agenda of every country in the region. This will be immediately followed by a regional conference on comprehensive early childhood development and care, organized by the UNICEF regional office. Other country and regional events, such as the Arab Child Day (7 October 2000), have also been planned to promote a new agenda for children.

C. Asia

46. In East Asia and the Pacific, a number of events have taken place. In May 2000, the Coalition against the Use of Child Soldiers, with UNICEF cooperation, organized an Asia/Pacific conference in Kathmandu, Nepal, to promote the implementation of international conventions and to identify particular problems in the region in regard to children.

47. In May 2000, in Manila, Philippines, the Global Network to Protect Children against Commercial Sexual Exploitation (ECPAT) organized an international meeting on young people's participation in the struggle against the commercial sexual exploitation of children. A subregional consultation on the Stockholm Agenda for Action, adopted at the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Stockholm, 27-31 August

1996), took place in August 2000, in Bangkok, Thailand. A major follow-up meeting to the World Congress is being planned for late 2001 in Yokohama, Japan.

48. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and UNICEF collaborated in drafting a report "ASEAN vision for children", which examines the state of children's rights in the 10-member countries. The report will be used to help develop the Second ASEAN Plan of Action for Children.

49. A youth survey focusing on children aged 9-18 and organized by the UNICEF regional office will take place in 11 countries of the region from October 2000 to February 2001. The survey, which will give young people an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns, will be shared with Governments, the media, religious and community leaders and civil society. A final report is expected to be launched at a ministerial consultation in May (see para. 52) to help disseminate the views of the region's policy makers before the special session on children. South Asia is considering a similar youth survey.

50. An Asia/Pacific Television Forum on Children and Youth is scheduled for 4-7 February 2001 in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The Forum is being organized jointly by the Korea Educational Broadcasting System, the Asia/Pacific Broadcasting Union, and UNICEF. It is aimed at heightening awareness among television producers and broadcasters of their key role in promoting the Global Movement for Children.

51. In South Asia, it is likely that UNICEF will be a lead partner in organizing a high-level consultation on the South Asian child (Kathmandu, May 2001), to review achievements regarding the World Summit goals. It is expected that, in addition to Governments, leading academics, child right experts, non-governmental organizations, the media and children and young people will participate. The meeting will draw on completed national reviews and data contained in *Atlas of the South Asian Child*, which UNICEF will publish in spring 2001.

52. For East Asia and the Pacific, a regional ministerial consultation will take place in China (Beijing, 14-16 May 2001). National reviews and progress over the course of the decade will be discussed. The consultation — the fifth in a series to follow-up on the goals of the World Summit for Children in the region — is organized with the UNICEF regional office. A preparatory meeting for the consultation will be held (Bangkok, 26-27 February 2001). These meetings will bring together government policy makers, young people, members of civil society and the private sector, and bilateral and multilateral organizations. They will serve to develop the region's views for the special session.

53. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) will convene the Third Asia/Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on Human Resources Development for Youth (Bangkok, 4-8 June 2001), with support from United Nations agencies in the region. The meeting will promote integrated approaches to sexual and reproductive health, prevention of substance abuse and HIV/AIDS, and mainstreaming of youth health issues into national policies and programmes.

D. Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States

54. The UNICEF country office in Ukraine organized a Caucasus area meeting on national responses to HIV/AIDS (Odessa, 5-7 June 2000). Over 90 decision makers from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and representatives from national AIDS centres and leading non-governmental organizations were brought together with the representatives of UNICEF, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank and the International Organization on Migration (IMO).

55. A regional conference on "Children Deprived of Parental Care: Rights and Realities" will take place in Budapest, Hungary, 22-24 October 2000. It is organized jointly by UNICEF and the regional NGO/UNICEF Committee for Children. The Conference aims to identify practical steps to ensure family-centred outcomes in child-care services and protection practices. The meeting will also examine tools to assess the state of the rights of children in public care that can contribute to the special session on children and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

56. Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations are organizing a regional consultation for the spring of 2001, building on the country-level

process, to analyse the situation of children across the region and to propose responses by civil society and Governments.

57. A regional intergovernmental meeting is being planned for April/May 2001 to review progress in achieving the World Summit goals and to propose a regional agenda for children for the next decade. The meeting will build upon national and subregional consultations. The location and precise date are to be determined.

58. The UNICEF regional office for Europe and the regional office for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) and the Baltic States are organizing the first-ever rights-based opinion poll of young people across the two regions. The poll will build upon UNICEF experience in conducting children's polls in both regions as well as surveys of young people in other regions. The results of the poll should be available in April 2001.

59. A "Generation in Jeopardy" conference is being organized in June 2001 by the Swedish National Committee for UNICEF, with the support of the UNICEF regional office for CEE/CIS/Baltic States.

60. It should be noted that end-of-decade reviews in this region will benefit from previous reports of the UNICEF International Child Development Centre in Florence regarding policies on children.

E. Europe

61. On 7 June 2000, a meeting of representatives from the presidency of the European Union at the time (Portugal) and the next three presidencies (France, Sweden and Belgium) took place in Brussels, together with key members of the European Parliament, representatives of the European Council and Commission and non-governmental organization coalitions. The main purpose of the meeting was to coordinate regional preparations for the special session on children.

62. A regional consultation will be held in Paris, France, on 31 May 2001 to discuss a new agenda for children in Europe and in developing countries. Planning is under way for a Europe-wide civil society organization consultation in March 2001, which would bring together regional networks of non-governmental organizations to discuss the new agenda for children. The civil society consultation will be coordinated by EURONET, a non-governmental organization network. The results, which will include a youth forum, will be presented to the regional consultation to be held subsequently in Paris.

63. The youth opinion poll referred to in paragraph 58 will provide an important basis for advocacy as well as for activities with and for children and young people.

F. Latin America and the Caribbean

64. The fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas will take place in Kingston, Jamaica, 9-13 October 2000. As part of a region-wide monitoring process carried out through biannual meetings, the meeting will assess progress against end-of-decade goals and develop region-wide commitments for children for the decade to come. Representatives from 37 countries in the hemisphere, including Canada and the United States, are expected to attend the meeting, which will discuss such issues as HIV/AIDS, adolescent participation, health, nutrition and education.

65. In support of the fifth Ministerial process, the Interagency Coordinating Committee for the Follow-up to the World Summit for Children in Latin America and the Caribbean has also been meeting on a regular basis. It includes representatives from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNAIDS, UNICEF, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Currently the Committee is chaired by UNICEF and is focusing on supporting the preparation of national reports on the implementation of the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children and the regional goals adopted at the fourth Ministerial Meeting in Peru.

66. The tenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State, to be held in Panama on 18 November 2000, will be attended by Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking

countries in the region as well as Portugal and Spain. The Summit will address the theme of children and adolescents. Ministerial meetings before the Summit will address such themes as children, women and gender, education, youth, public health, agriculture and labour.

VI. Key global events

67. Several recent global events are expected to have an impact on the preparatory process of the special session on children. The Framework for Action adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000 confirmed the expanded vision of education outlined 10 years ago at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, and proposed a new set of time-bound goals and strategies in basic education for the new decade and beyond. It recommends giving priority to countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, to other least developed countries, and to countries in crisis.

68. The thirteenth International Conference on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases, held in Durban, South Africa, in July 2000 with the theme "Break the silence", underscored the importance of closing the gap between knowledge and action against the pandemic. The Conference went beyond looking at the pandemic as a health and scientific concern, to viewing it as a social reality and as a challenge to all sectors of society. The Conference addressed such issues as the massive amount of resources needed and the strategic thinking and action required for effective prevention, care and support.

69. In April 2000, the Group of 77 convened the first South Summit in Havana, Cuba. Representatives from 133 developing countries adopted a Declaration which included specific consideration of children's rights and needs. The Declaration welcomed the decision to convene the special session on children and expressed full commitment to its preparation. It addressed such issues as women and children forced to live in extreme poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, children involved in and affected by armed conflict, and the trafficking of women and children.

70. The G-8 Summit in Okinawa, Japan, in July 2000 gave special impetus to promoting the well-being of children through a special initiative to combat infectious diseases.

71. At the United Nations Millennium Summit held in September 2000 at Headquarters, heads of State and Government agreed on a Summit Declaration which contained specific commitments relating to children and youth. They include ensuring that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete primary schooling and will have equal access to all levels of education. The Declaration also resolved to, by the same date, reduce maternal mortality by three quarters and under-five child mortality by two thirds. Other key commitments relate to the spread of HIV/AIDS, the scourge of malaria and other major diseases, assistance to children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, and strategies to give young people a chance to find decent and productive work. They also sought to ensure that children and all civilian populations who suffer disproportionately from natural disasters, genocide, armed conflict and other humanitarian emergencies are given assistance and protection. On the occasion of the Summit, a significant number of heads of State and Government signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child: 59 signed the Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, and 57 signed the Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

72. The spouses of about 70 of the heads of State and Government attending the Millennium Summit gathered at the Forum on Girls' Education to exchange experiences on, and draw attention to, the gender gap that deprives millions of girls around the world of schooling.

73. The International Conference on War-affected Children, held at Winnipeg, Canada, in September 2000, convened representatives of Governments and non-governmental organizations, experts and young people from around the world to discuss issues of children affected by war. It aimed at galvanizing international efforts to strengthen preventive mechanisms and to end impunity for those who abuse children in wartime.

74. Finally, the General Assembly has decided to convene a special session before the end of its fifty-sixth session to review and address the problem of HIV/AIDS and to coordinate and intensify international efforts to combat it. Extensive cooperation and interaction is expected between participants in this event and in the special session on children.

VII. Public information activities

75. In order to raise awareness of the special session, UNICEF is disseminating information by several means. Regular updates on the preparatory process are made available through UNICEF regional and country offices, in order to facilitate coordination of activities at all levels. The UNICEF web site includes background information on the World Summit for Children and preparations for the special session being taken by Governments, non-governmental organizations, children and young people; reviews at the national, regional and global levels; and the next steps in the preparatory process.[5] The site also contains all official documents for the special session. Promotional materials produced for the special session include a variety of leaflets, media materials and reports designed for a widening audience. The *State of the World's Children, 2001*, to be launched in December 2000, will focus on early childhood development and will also provide information on the special session.

VIII. Mobilization of financial resources

A. Requirements of the substantive secretariat

76. In decision 1999/12, the UNICEF Executive Board approved initial contributions to the preparation of the special session in the amount of $2 million. These preliminary requirements were met in late 1999 through contributions from the National Committees for UNICEF of Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States. Subsequently, an additional budget of $5.4 million was approved by the UNICEF Executive Board (decision 2000/6 of May 2000) to support the preparatory activities to be undertaken by the substantive secretariat of the special session. That includes global advocacy for children's rights and for the special session; mobilization of children, youth and civil society organizations; support for regional advocacy; and related staff costs. As of 25 September 2000, the Governments of Bangladesh, Ireland, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States had announced contributions to this budget. Countries willing to contribute to the preparatory activities of the special session are requested to do so through the UNICEF established account.

B. Participation of the least developed countries

77. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly stressed the importance of the full participation of the least developed countries in the special session and its preparation, and invited Governments to make appropriate contributions to a trust fund to be established for that purpose. The trust fund has been established and, in response to a note verbale from the Secretary-General dated 20 April 2000, Member States have started making contributions or are pledging to do so. As of 25 September 2000, contributions had been received from Cyprus, Finland, Greece and the United Kingdom.

Notes

[1] See A/55/43, part I.

[2] See A/55/43, part II.

[3] See A/55/43, part II, annex I, for a summary of the discussions on the report.

[4] See A/55/43, part II, annexes II, III, and IV for summaries of the panel discussions.

[5] See the UNICEF web site: http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/.